

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held at the Council Offices, Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury on Tuesday, 23 January 2024 commencing at 6:00 pm

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor
Deputy Mayor

Councillor I Yates
Councillor P N Workman

and Councillors:

N D Adcock, C Agg, H J Bowman, T J Budge, C L J Carter, C M Cody, C F Coleman, M Dimond-Brown, S R Dove, P A Godwin, M A Gore, D W Gray, S Hands, D J Harwood, A Hegenbarth, M L Jordan, E J MacTiernan, G C Madle, J R Mason, H C McLain, P D McLain, C E Mills, J P Mills, K Pervaiz, E C Skelt, J K Smith, P E Smith, R J G Smith, R J Stanley, M R Stewart, H Sundarajoo, M G Sztymiak, R J E Vines and M J Williams

CL.78 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 78.1 The evacuation procedure, as noted on the Agenda, was advised to those present.
- 78.2 The Mayor welcomed a member of the public to the meeting and indicated that they would be asking a question at Agenda Item 5 in accordance with the scheme of public participation.

CL.79 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 79.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P W Ockelton and G F Porter.

CL.80 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 80.1 The Committee's attention was drawn to the Tewkesbury Borough Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council on 24 January 2023 and took effect on 1 February 2023.
- 80.2 There were no declarations made on this occasion.

CL.81 MINUTES

- 81.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023, copies of which had been circulated, were approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment to Page No. 14, Minute No. CL.75.7 to read: 'During the discussion which ensued, a Member indicated that she had previously received many complaints from residents regarding the Mop Fair offering goldfish as prizes and she was pleased this was no longer the case, **having changed in 2020....**' and Page No. 16, Minute No. CL.75.16 to include a reference to Trading Standards, and signed by the Mayor.

CL.82 ITEMS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

82.1 A member of the public had used the Council's Scheme of Public Participation to ask a question of the relevant Lead Member. The Mayor invited the member of the public to address the Council and ask his question and the Leader of the Council responded as follows:

Question:

The current governance arrangements for Coopers Edge, a development of 1,900 homes with a population of 4,500, in the three Parishes of Brockworth, Hucclecote (Tewkesbury Borough) and Upton St Leonard's (Stroud District), have been completely untenable for many years.

Currently both District and County services operate within silos divided by the District boundary. Even policing is a bureaucratic wrangle with different neighbourhood policing teams responsible for different parts of the development. It is probable that the significant delays in the delivery of community infrastructure (including allotments and sporting facilities) and the adoption of public open space and highways is related to lack of a single organisation to champion the community's needs in an effective way.

The community cannot legally be placed into a single Parish without being within a single District or Borough. Similarly, the area cannot be covered by a single County Councillor without the area being in a single District or Borough. The same applies in terms of a single District Ward.

There is an urgent need for a "Principal Areas Boundary Review" to be undertaken to enable the community to be within one District; concurrently a Community Governance Review needs to take place to either establish a new Parish Council for the area or place it within a single existing Parish.

The guidance in relation to the Principal Area Boundary Review process requires a firm proposal supported by the relevant District/City/Borough Councils to be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, who would in turn make a recommendation to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This inevitably requires significant community consultation to be undertaken at various stages.

Can the Leader of the Council clarify whether urgently resolving these issues is on his administration's radar and, if it is, will it be included in the forthcoming refresh of the Tewkesbury Borough Council Plan; additionally, is it realistic for this to be delivered in time for the 2027 Borough and Parish elections?

Answer:

As a former resident of Coopers Edge, I am aware of some of the challenges faced by the local community there. I also acknowledge that the current arrangements in terms of governance and service delivery are not ideal and could be confusing.

Against this background, I welcome your positive suggestion and feel that it is something worth exploring with Stroud District Council if a robust argument can be put forward and evidence provided of a strong wish for change within the community. If this can be demonstrated, and a formal request for change is made to both authorities, the full implications and impacts of any proposal would need to be evaluated before being presented to Members for debate and decision.

It is difficult to be precise regarding timeframes at this early stage. As stated, the first requirement is the identification of the level of local support for change. This could be community-led and should involve the three existing Parish Councils.

From the Borough Council's perspective, the officers who are likely to be involved in any formal review process are currently focussed on upcoming elections and,

dependent upon timing of the Parliamentary Election, it may be some months (and even into 2025/26) before significant time and resource might be available. I suspect that a similar situation may well apply for Stroud. We are happy to consider approaching the Parish Councils to ask them whether they think this is something the community would want and advise them of what they would need to do to start the process. We would ask the same of Stroud.

The emerging Council's Plan which is currently out for consultation has set out caring for place and caring for people as two of the key priorities which this proposal meets. It would not really be appropriate to specify this proposal specifically in what is a strategic document - this would be more relevant if a Borough-wide, or indeed County-wide, review of boundaries was to be pursued (although any expanded review would inevitably lead to longer overall timescales). That said, it can still be pursued, and the review would also fit with our vision of supporting people and strengthening communities.

82.2 The Mayor thanked the member of the public for their participation and indicated that they would receive a copy of the question and answer following the meeting.

CL.83 MEMBER QUESTIONS PROPERLY SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

83.1 There were no Member questions.

CL.84 APPOINTMENT OF CIVIC HEADS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Mayor

84.1 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED That Councillor Philip Workman be appointed Mayor for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Deputy Mayor

84.2 Upon being proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED That Councillor Kashan Pervaiz be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the ensuing Municipal Year.

CL.85 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Treasury and Capital Management

85.1 At its meeting on 10 January 2024, the Executive Committee considered the Capital Strategy 2024/25, Investment Strategy 2024/25, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25 and Treasury Management Statement 2024/25 and recommended to Council that they be adopted.

85.2 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 19-52.

85.3 As Chair of the Executive Committee, the Leader of the Council proposed the recommendation of the Executive Committee and it was seconded by the Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management. The Lead Member for Finance and Asset Management advised that the documents outlined the Council's approach to its management of finances, with a focus on how money was invested, capital spent and how its treasury function was managed. The four key documents before

Members today had been developed to offer assurance to Members, the local community and wider stakeholders that the Council's finances were being managed in an appropriate and sustainable way across the next year and beyond. Having these strategies in place ensured that the Council was in line with the expectations of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code. The documents were expected to be updated on an annual basis so, for a number of Members, they would not be new; the strategies were based on those agreed last year and no major amendments had been made. Members would be aware that the quarterly financial report included an update on the Council's prudential indicators therefore the actual figures and financial position could be scrutinised on a regular basis through the financial year.

85.4 A Member noted from the table at Page No. 27 of the report that the total net income reduced over the years but, in light of the Council's commercial investment, she wondered if it should at least stay the same. The Executive Director: Resources advised that in terms of the minimum revenue provision this was set aside each year to repay the Council's borrowing and deducted from that sum, therefore, it reduced on an annual basis. Direct income from the Council's properties was retained at the same level so hopefully would increase. In response to a further Member query, clarification was provided that the figures in the table were in thousands i.e. £3,135 was actually £3,135,000 and the Executive Director: Resources undertook to ensure that was updated in next year's report.

84.5 Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED That the Capital Strategy 2024/25, Investment Strategy 2024/25, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25 and Treasury Management Statement 2024/25 be **ADOPTED**.

Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Joint Committee

85.6 At its meeting on 10 January 2024, the Executive Committee recommended to Council that establishment of a Community Infrastructure Levy Joint Committee with the Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, including the pooling of strategic Community Infrastructure Levy monies by Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough Councils be approved; that the amended Infrastructure List, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved for publication; and that engagement with a wide range of infrastructure providers e.g. NHS, emergency services, Environment Agency be endorsed in order to identify any wider infrastructure priorities to be considered by the Community Infrastructure Levy Joint Committee.

85.7 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 53-74.

85.8 As Chair of the Executive Committee, the Leader of the Council proposed the recommendation of the Executive Committee and it was seconded by the Lead Member for Built Environment. The Leader of the Council advised that this was a joint approach, working with Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City Councils to deliver the strategic infrastructure required for the whole area to serve all three communities, for example, a new waste depot. He stressed that decisions would be by consensus so all three authorities would need to agree and no one could be outvoted. In terms of the Infrastructure List, this was an ongoing list which could be amended and added to – it was to be borne in mind that it was not for smaller infrastructure for communities which could otherwise be met through Section 106 contributions and, in any case, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding was sadly not enough to meet all infrastructure needs. The Lead Member for Built Environment advised that the report sought Council's support for the establishment

of a Community Infrastructure Levy Joint Committee to provide governance for the allocation of the strategic infrastructure part of CIL receipts collected by the three partner councils and recommended approval of the Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; pooling of strategic CIL infrastructure funding by the three partner councils; publication of the amended Infrastructure List, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, and engagement with a wider range of infrastructure providers to identify other priorities for consideration by the Joint Committee for inclusion on the Infrastructure List. The Terms of Reference included the following requirements: an agreement to pool funding, subject to a periodic review; consensus of all three partner councils for proposed allocations; decisions and reviews to be reported to the Executive Committee or Cabinet; agreement of the joint Infrastructure List as part of the Infrastructure Funding Statement in December each year; agreement of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, updated to support the joint Strategic and Local Plan (SLP) and; for Gloucestershire County Council to attend meetings but have no voting rights or scrutiny of bids for funding. Members would recall that when CIL funding was received it went into three pots: up to 5% may be used for administrative costs, either 15% or 25%, depending on whether a Neighbourhood Development Plan was in place, must be passed to the parish in which the development took place; and the remaining 70-80% must be spent in accordance with Regulation 59 of the CIL Regulations 2010 for the provision, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area – it was the third pot that was proposed to be pooled. In terms of the Infrastructure List set out at Appendix 2 to the report, an amendment had been made to the version approved for publication in December 2023 at the request of Gloucestershire County Council to the pipeline of projects requiring more work to identify costs, as such, the title of the final section 'Projects not to be funded from CIL' had been removed, with the three projects that had been identified under that category being included in the group of 'shared' projects. Lastly, with regard to wider engagement, the Infrastructure List included only local authority priorities, therefore, a wider targeted exercise was proposed with key stakeholders such as the NHS, emergency services, utilities, Environment Agency, Sports England and others to identify other priorities for consideration by the Joint Committee.

- 85.9 With Tewkesbury Borough being largely rural in nature, a Member questioned how it was proposed to manage the risk that priorities for CIL spend would be biased towards the urban infrastructure requirements. In response, the Leader of the Council advised that it was incumbent upon them to ensure the funding was used to serve Tewkesbury Borough Council residents primarily whilst being mindful of the holistic strategic infrastructure for the area; he had already made reference to a waste depot as an example of strategic infrastructure which would benefit all communities. A Member asked how each part of the borough would get its fair share given that some had experienced significantly more residential development than others and therefore had greater need for infrastructure to support that growth, for instance, Brockworth desperately needed a GP surgery. The Leader of the Council was sympathetic to the needs of Brockworth but all communities would have their own strains and pressures and the CIL pot would not be able to solve all infrastructure needs. As a local authority, it was important to utilise Section 106 monies and to ensure that developers were being held accountable for their commitments. He would be happy to work with Members on an individual basis to see what more could be done to address any specific issues.
- 85.10 Another Member sought clarification as to the statement that decisions would be made by consensus and was advised that decisions had to be unanimous so there would not be a situation where two authorities could outvote the third partner. A Member asked how that would work in practice and what would happen if a consensus could not be reached. The Chief Executive explained that, ultimately, the partnership would dissolve and another mechanism would need to be

introduced for how to use CIL money; however, given the maturity of the partnership and the engagement work that was taking place with Gloucestershire County Council which would also be part of the Committee, albeit without a vote, he was confident they would be able to come to sensible decisions. In response to a query regarding transparency, confirmation was provided that meetings would be minuted. A Member raised concern that there would only be one Member from each partner authority on the Committee and the Leader of the Council clarified there would be two Members from each partner authority, as set out in the Terms of Reference at Page No. 57, Paragraph 3.3 of the report which stated that each authority would appoint a Committee Member and a substitute – this would be the Leader and the Lead Member for Built Environment from each of the three partner authorities. Whilst there would be up to six Members in the meeting, three of those would be substitutes and there would be one vote per authority – meetings would always require three Members with the ability to vote. A Member raised concern that both the Leader and the Lead Member for Built Environment represented the same part of the borough and she would have liked to have seen more of a split in terms of representation on the Committee. Another Member asked if it was appropriate for the two representatives to be from the same political party. In response, the Leader of the Council indicated that the appointments were not party political or Ward specific and they would be representing the whole borough in their Lead Member roles. For context, the Lead Member for Built Environment clarified that the amount of money within the CIL pot was in the region of £11m which would not be enough to fund even half of the projects and could easily be spent on a single piece of infrastructure such as a school or road.

- 85.11 A Member drew attention to the table within the Infrastructure List at Page No. 73 of the report and noted that £8m of the £11m within the CIL pot came from development within Tewkesbury Borough; however, Cheltenham Borough Council was asking for £4.5m to complete its work despite only providing £2.5m and she asked if that meant that money from Tewkesbury Borough's development would essentially be going to Cheltenham Borough if that was agreed. The Leader of the Council felt the Member was right to point out the difference in terms of who brought what to the pot and these were robust conversations for the Committee to have; however, in terms of this example, it was necessary to look at cross benefits for both parties and what Cheltenham Borough Council could bring to the table that Tewkesbury Borough Council did not have, for instance, land for infrastructure. The Member pointed out that Tewkesbury Borough covered a huge area and she would not like to see urban need prioritised over local rural need. The Leader of the Council pointed out that a lot of local infrastructure need should be being met by Section 106 and there was not enough money in the pot to meet all local infrastructure needs. He was aware that developers needed to be held accountable for Section 106 with infrastructure brought forward in a more timely manner and there was more to be done in terms of ensuring the right contributions were secured from the outset, but the CIL pot was very much strategic and would be used to the benefit of the whole borough and projects which met that test. He acknowledged there were things on the Infrastructure List currently which did not meet that test and those conversations were to be had by the Committee.

85.12 Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

1. That establishment of a Community Infrastructure Levy Joint Committee with the Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, including the pooling of strategic Community Infrastructure Levy monies by Cheltenham Borough, Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough Councils be **APPROVED**.
2. That the amended Infrastructure List, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be **APPROVED** for publication.
3. That engagement with a wide range of infrastructure providers e.g. NHS, emergency services, Environment Agency be endorsed in order to identify any wider infrastructure priorities to be considered by the Community Infrastructure Levy Joint Committee.

Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground

- 85.13 At its meeting on 10 January 2024, the Executive Committee recommended to Council that the revised version of the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground be approved with the dashes in the “agreements” section removed and the removal of Appendix 3 to the previously approved version; and that authority be delegated to the Executive Director: Place, in consultation with the Lead Member for Built Environment, to make those amendments along with any necessary minor amendments, corrections and additions to in respect of any spelling, grammatical, cross-referencing, typographical errors and/or factual updates prior to signing by the Leader or Chief Executive.
- 85.14 The report which was considered by the Executive Committee had been circulated with the Agenda for the current meeting at Pages No. 75-112.
- 85.15 As Chair of the Executive Committee, the Leader of the Council proposed the recommendation of the Executive Committee and it was seconded by the Lead Member for Built Environment. The Leader of the Council explained that the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground had been prepared by the six local planning authorities in Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire County Council and the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership. The statement had been approved by Tewkesbury Borough Council in January 2023 with a number of caveats to the agreements contained within it and the Council now wished to fully sign up to all of the agreements and remove any caveats.
- 85.16 A Member drew attention to Page No. 87 of the report and, with regard to Agreement 4 – The parties agree that responses to the climate and ecological emergencies must be commensurate with the scale and severity of the risk, and that coordinated action is the most effective means of responding – sought assurance that the Council was mindful of economic and financial implications and how the authority and its partners could incentivise greater uptake of alternative forms e.g. for Council Tax, Business Rates and non-strategic planning. With regard to Page No. 91 of the report, Agreement 32 – The parties will support the form and location of appropriate waste management facilities to positively support a progressive approach to waste management and press on with the move towards a circular economy. The parties will actively discourage waste management facilities that do not contribute to the development of the circular economy – the Member sought assurance this would not be to the detriment of Tewkesbury Borough residents. In response, the Leader of the Council indicated he was very happy to give assurances on both points; it was recognised that the authority had financial parameters and he did not feel that signing up to this left the authority vulnerable in terms of the issues raised. A Member noted that Page No. 91, Paragraph 7.1 of the

report contained a bullet point which was incomplete: “The Senior Responsible Officer for the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground will be XXX. They are charged with XXX.” She understood this was a published document rather than a draft and she asked whether that information should be included. The Chief Executive explained that, whilst the document predated his involvement with the authority, there was a strategic director group tasked with taking this forward and each authority would have a different person in that particular box; this was a process issue which would be taken up with that group accordingly.

- 85.17 With regard to Page No. 92, Paragraph 8.3 of the report, a Member noted that the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground was a live document which needed to be kept up-to-date on an annual basis. She asked if all authorities had to agree the document at the same time and what annual basis meant in this context. The Chief Executive advised that the initial intention was to move towards a joint strategic plan for Gloucestershire with all authorities signing up to a 50 year long plan but that had not worked well for the authorities within Leadership Gloucestershire who wanted an annual document stating the direction of travel as a precursor to doing the planning work. They were being encouraged by the local planning authorities to look at an overarching plan to support infrastructure at a higher level to work for the Strategic and Local Plan (SLP); however, things such as energy generation could not be done at SLP level so it was necessary for local planning authorities to work with the County Council etc. In terms of how to approach these issues, this could be done by supporting the work of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, keeping informed on strategic planning work between the three districts when that was important and talking collaboratively about the long term future of the county. The value of the document was in setting out the areas where the authorities aligned and therefore where collaborative working could take place.
- 85.18 A Member sought clarification as to the rationale for the caveats when the document had been approved by Council in January 2023 and the Leader of the Council indicated that he could not really answer that question as in his view they were common sense or things which would be good to do for the benefit of residents. Whilst it was not a strategic planning document, he felt getting it right was the first step to continuing the wider strategic work through the SLP.
- 85.19 During the debate which ensued, a Member indicated that he was pleased to see this report coming forward and agreed that the caveats should be removed, especially in terms of flood resilience and the strategic response. In terms of Page No. 109 of the report which referenced the climate change agreements, he pointed out that Tewkesbury Borough Council had now declared an ecological emergency. The Leader of the Council indicated that he agreed that the climate and ecological emergency was a risk to the community and that Tewkesbury Borough Council should not have opted out of the agreements in respect of climate change; however, making the change today would demonstrate how far the Council had come in a short space of time. A Member indicated that, as a new Councillor, she could not understand why some of the caveats had been agreed, for instance, recognising the importance of active travel and introducing policies which would require developments to contribute to quality of the walking and cycling network for users of all abilities and disabilities. She was happy that Officers had worked quickly with Members to bring this back to Council and that the recommendation was to fully opt in to all of the agreements.
- 85.20 A Member recognised that it had taken a considerable amount of time to get the document to its current position and there would be great reluctance to change it other than to remove the caveats; however, he would like to see the following agreements strengthened: Page No. 87, Agreement 5 – “wherever possible deliver a positive contribution” to be extended by adding “and never a negative one”; Agreement 6 replaced with “the parties agree that alternative forms of energy will be

a very important part of the county's infrastructure mix. They will investigate their use as a matter of urgency in line with environmental and landscape considerations"; Page No. 89, Agreement 18 and Agreement 22 and Page No. 90, Agreement 25 replace "should" with "must"; and Page No. 90, Agreement 34, replace "seek" with "aim". In his view, having declared a climate change and ecological emergency, saying "should" felt very weak.. Rather than adjusting the wording today, he wished to put on record that there should be an active push to amend the document as soon as practicable to strengthen and reflect what the Council had voted on previously.

85.21 A Member indicated that her issue with the document was that there had always been an urban focus and Tewkesbury Borough was very rural in nature with many outlying villages – she could not see how cycling could become mass transit without an urban-centric policy so she did not feel that statement could be achieved. Another Member expressed the view that she did not think the document was saying that cycling would take precedence over everything else. A Member indicated that she had found it incredibly frustrating when the document had been considered by Council previously and was happy this was one of the first things on the list for the new administration to bring back, particularly as Tewkesbury Borough Council had now declared an ecological emergency.

85.22 Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the revised version of the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground be **APPROVED** with the dashes in the "agreements" section removed and the removal of Appendix 3 to the previously approved version.
2. That authority be delegated to the Executive Director: Place, in consultation with the Lead Member for Built Environment, to make those amendments along with any necessary minor amendments, corrections and additions to in respect of any spelling, grammatical, cross-referencing, typographical errors and/or factual updates prior to signing by the Leader or Chief Executive.

CL.86 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES/STATIONS

86.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Democratic and Elections Adviser, circulated at Pages No. 113-184, the additional recommendations, circulated separately, and the alternative polling district proposal for Tewkesbury South TSH3(C), circulated around the table. Collectively these documents provided the outcome of the review undertaken in respect of polling districts and polling places/stations within the Borough. Members were asked to approve the recommendations set out at Appendix 1 to the report subject to the amended proposal for Tewkesbury South polling district TSH3(C); pending any further formal review, to delegate authority to the Returning Officer to make any further polling place and/or polling station changes as necessary to enable the efficient and effective conduct of elections; to delegate authority to the Electoral Registration Officer to make any changes necessary to the Register of Electors; to remove numbers from polling district references and replace them with letters (with any reference to 1 becoming A, 2 becoming B, 3 becoming C and so on); and to delegate authority to the Electoral Registration Officer to make any further changes as may be necessary to polling district references.

86.2 The Democratic and Elections Adviser explained it was a statutory requirement for local authorities to undertake a regular review of all polling districts, polling places and polling stations within their area. The last review had been carried out in 2019 but, due to the Parliamentary election that year, it had been light touch in nature. As

such, this was a very fundamental review which took account of 10 years of residential development across the borough, including changes to the Brockworth area where there had been significant development. There was a 16 month window within which to conduct the review but the decision had been taken to carry out the review early in that period so that any new arrangements could be put in place ahead of the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner and Parliamentary elections. There had been a comprehensive consultation with Members of Parliament with Constituencies within Tewkesbury Borough, County and Borough Councillors, Town and Parish Councils/Meetings within the Borough, and other interested parties including community groups and local organisations. There had been a relatively good response and he was grateful to Members who had commented and those with whom he had had more detailed discussions, particularly where changes were being recommended, as their local knowledge had been invaluable.

- 86.3 In summary, the majority of the existing arrangements remained fit for purpose against the statutory guidance; however, there were a number of changes proposed largely resulting from residential development that had been carried out but also others where improvements could be made for the benefit of electors. While the next statutory review period would begin in October 2028, the arrangements would be reviewed more informally after each election as a matter of course and, if it was felt further improvements could be made, these could be brought to Members on a full or part borough basis. In addition, where other electoral reviews were conducted - for instance, a review of the Gloucestershire County Council electoral divisions was currently being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England - the arrangements would be reviewed to ensure they reflected any alterations arising and remained fit for purpose.
- 86.4 The Democratic Services and Elections Adviser drew attention to the two additional recommendations, circulated separately, and explained these were largely administrative to address concerns regarding the use of numbers in polling district references when combined with elector numbers, and the particular need in cross-boundary Parliamentary constituencies to ensure that there was no duplication of polling district references. In terms of the further paper circulated around the table, this had resulted from a recent request to look again at the proposals for the Tewkesbury South polling district, which he would address in more detail when the debate reached the Tewkesbury South section of the report. He confirmed that he had heard back from the Acting Returning Officers for the Forest of Dean and North Cotswolds Parliamentary Constituencies who were happy with the proposals in the report in terms of the polling stations which would be within those new Parliamentary constituencies. He advised that there had been a request to use Bishop's Cleeve Nursing Home as a polling place but, unfortunately, that was not possible so further investigation would continue for a dedicated polling place for the residents of Cleeve West within the polling district.
- 86.5 Taking each of the Borough Wards in turn, it was noted that no changes were proposed in relation to Cleeve Grange Ward, Cleeve Hill Ward, Cleeve West Ward, Highnam and Haw Bridge Ward, Northway Ward, Severn Vale North Ward, Severn Vale South Ward, Shurdington Ward and Winchcombe Ward.
- 86.6 With regard to Badgeworth Ward, one change was recommended which would effectively split the Ward into two polling districts, one of which would cover a small discreet residential development on the boundary with Cheltenham Borough further away from the Badgeworth village area. As such, a new polling place was proposed at FC Lakeside for electors in that area, as set out on the plan at Page No. 125 of the report.
- 86.7 In terms of Brockworth East Ward, there had been significant development in the area already with further development proposed, largely around Perrybrook. Previously there had been three polling districts but BRE2 and BRE3 could be

legitimately combined, so it was proposed that there be two polling districts using the stream as the dividing line - with the traditional development in BRE2(B) and a polling place at Brockworth Community Centre and the majority of the Perrybrook development and the newer development to follow in BRE1(A) with a new polling place at Brockworth Rugby Football Club. A Member raised concern that the Horsbere Brook was splitting the development in half - there would be new development on both sides of the Brook and she asked if that would be considered going forward. In response, the Democratic and Elections Adviser explained that Horsbere Brook provided a natural boundary for Brockworth East; the new development referenced by the Member related to Brockworth West. He provided assurance that the situation would be monitored as development came forward to ensure the arrangements remained fit for purpose.

- 86.8 The proposals for Brockworth West Ward were set out at Page No. 136 of the report and would mean that residents of BRW2(B) would have their own dedicated polling place at the Victoria Inn which was more convenient for electors in the area and was readily accessible by foot. The other change was in relation to BRW1(A) and BRW3(C) and, as Members had heard from the public question which was part of an earlier Agenda item, there was an area of the Brockworth West Ward which comprised part of the Cooper's Edge development so it was suggested that a discreet polling district be provided to cater for those electors (with a similar arrangement being proposed for that part of Cooper's Edge that fell within Hucclecote parish). The proposed polling place was outside of the borough at The Edge Community Centre, a facility which was already used as a polling place by residents who were part of Cooper's Edge within Stroud District. In effect, the proposals would create an informal arrangement to bring the community of Cooper's Edge together for voting purposes, although some improvements to parking arrangements would be desirable. In addition, the new Parliamentary constituency arrangement would see Brockworth West move to the North Cotswolds Constituency with Upton St Leonards so, from a community cohesion point of view, it was future-proofing polling places at a Parliamentary level. A Member supported this proposal wholeheartedly as it would make life easier for residents of Cooper's Edge. He noted that, if use of The Edge Community Centre was not feasible, the recommended fall-back option was for electors to use St Patrick's Church Hall and he asked if it was possible to use the Victoria Inn instead on the basis it was easier to find and a better landmark. This option was supported by another Member, as it provided a more direct route for vehicles and had better parking provision. In response, the Democratic Services and Elections Adviser explained that the fall-back option had only been included in case the highway and parking issues in Cooper's Edge around the community centre, which was adjacent to a school and had no dedicated parking spaces, could not be resolved. He was in discussion with Gloucestershire County Council to seek a solution to the problems, at least for the upcoming May election(s), and he knew that both the community centre and the school were in contact with County Highways regarding a more permanent solution. Although he believed that The Edge Community Centre was the right polling place for Cooper's Edge residents, it would not be appropriate for the Council to approve it as a polling place without a fall-back in case the issues around highway safety could not be resolved. The Democratic and Elections Adviser suggested that the proposal be amended so that the fall-back could be either St Patrick's Church Hall or the Victoria Inn (so that there was no requirement to refer the matter back to Council); and, if the need arose and it was possible to accommodate a second polling station at the Victoria Inn then that would be the initial fall-back option. He undertook to speak to the Ward Members concerned if it was necessary to consider St Patrick's Church Hall. The proposer of the motion expressed the view this was a sensible compromise and he felt reasonably confident that, unless the area had changed significantly, the pinch point was at school drop-off and pick-up times so there were parking spaces available most of the day. Another Member queried whether having two fall-back options diluted the chances of securing a highway scheme for the The

Edge Community Centre. In response, the Democratic and Elections Adviser provided assurance that the report was very clear that The Edge Community Centre was the right place for that area of Brockworth West, and part of Hucclecote, so the first aim would be to secure that.

- 86.9 With regard to Churchdown Brookfield with Hucclecote Ward, Members were advised that there were two parts to the proposal. In terms of Churchdown Brookfield, attention was drawn to Page No. 141 of the report and Members were informed that, when reviewing the new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries, two anomalies had been identified between the Ward boundaries approved by the Council under its Community Governance Review in 2022 and the revised Constituency boundaries of Tewkesbury and North Cotswolds - one of which was in Churchdown Brookfield Ward. Whilst there were currently no electors in this area, the proposal would provide future-proofing in the event that residential properties were constructed on this land. In terms of Hucclecote, as set out at Page No. 143 of the report, the same arrangements were proposed as for Brockworth West in that HCC1(A) was recommended as a discreet polling district with The Edge Community Centre as a preferred polling place, with a caveat that Pineholt Village Hall be identified as a fall-back option. A Member suggested that the vast majority of people from Cooper's Edge would walk to their polling station and it was only a maximum 10 minute walk from most locations to Pineholt Village Hall; and in the absence of significant local support for the change he felt that no change should be made. In response, the Democratic and Elections Adviser explained that this proposal sought to separate the discreet elements of the Cooper's Edge development, as had been proposed for a similar area falling within the Brockworth West Ward. In addition, there was no direct road link for residents of this part of Cooper's Edge to Pineholt Village Hall. Furthermore, whichever polling place was selected, it was hoped that many electors would walk to their polling stations. It was also explained that proposals from a review of this nature were not restricted to the consultation responses received and it was incumbent on Officers to conduct the review in light of statutory guidance and seek to ensure that, where possible, the most appropriate arrangements were put in place for the benefit of electors. Given the history of Cooper's Edge, and the various representations made not only to this review but also more generally about future governance arrangements for the area, a judgement had been taken by Officers as to what appropriate arrangements might be. However, it was for Members to decide whether to concur with that judgement or to agree an alternative.
- 86.10 In terms of Churchdown St John's Ward, very little change was proposed as outlined at Page No. 144 of the report. Historically, by virtue of a Community Governance Review, two separate polling districts, CHJ3 and CHJ4, had had to be created within the Ward, but that arrangement was no longer required and they could now be combined. The proposed new polling district CHJ4(D) was the other area where there was an anomaly with the new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries. Again, whilst there were currently no electors in this area of land, a separate polling district would future-proof polling arrangements.
- 86.11 With regard to Cleeve St Michael's Ward, no changes were being recommended to the boundary of the two polling districts but a new community facility - Homelands Community Building - was due to be available in March/April and would be a more convenient polling place for electors in BCM2(B).
- 86.12 In terms of Cleeve West Ward, whilst no changes were being made to the current arrangements, attention had been drawn to a potential community facility within the Bishops Cleeve Nursing Home which might have been a possibility for hosting a polling station for Cleeve West electors; however, the Nursing Home could not accommodate a polling station and therefore the new community facility on the Cleevelands site was likely to provide a viable alternative location for the future, albeit that was some way off being delivered. In respect of Longford Ward, a

historic Community Governance Review had split Longford into two polling districts. However, this was no longer necessary, and it was recommended that the two existing polling districts be combined.

- 86.13 Members were advised that no substantive changes were proposed to Isbourne Ward aside from combining the two existing polling districts within Toddington into one. A Member noted that Wormington now had its own Parish Meeting and she asked whether there was any appetite for a polling station within Wormington; particularly as the Church was often used for Parish Meetings and would be a more convenient location for residents to walk to rather than driving to Dumbleton. The Democratic and Elections Adviser explained that all Parish Councils and Parish Meetings within the Borough had been consulted and no formal response had been received in respect of the current arrangements for Dumbleton or Wormington, so the assumption had been made that the current arrangements were acceptable. In addition, unless there was a strong community desire, a standalone polling place would not usually be allocated for what would be less than 100 electors, taking account of postal voters; notwithstanding this, he was happy to monitor the situation going forward.
- 86.14 In terms of Severn Vale North Ward, whilst no changes were proposed, consideration had been given to changing the portacabin arrangement at The Leigh with a potential alternative location at the Farm Shop on the A38; however, given the speed limit of the road, the fact that the access was not particularly good and the site itself was not that large, for the time being the portacabin remained the most sensible option.
- 86.15 With regard to Shurdington Ward, a request had been made by the North Cotswolds Constituency Labour Party to look at whether there was a suitable new polling place for electors from a number of newer dwellings further from the more traditional village core; however, there had been no public request of that nature and the current arrangement was considered to remain fit for purpose for the time being, although the situation would be monitored and if there was further development it might necessitate a change.
- 86.16 Members were advised that no substantive changes were proposed for Tewkesbury East Ward but the Wheatpieces area had been sub-divided by a previous Community Governance Review which was no longer necessary so the two polling districts would be combined. Similarly, in Tewkesbury North and Twyning Ward, it was recommended that TNT2 and TNT3 be combined into one polling district with Twyning remaining as a separate polling district.
- 86.17 Turning to Tewkesbury South Ward, the initial set of amendments was set out at Page No. 173 of the report with a further amendment having been circulated around the table at the meeting. It was noted that concerns had been raised about the location of the Tewkesbury Youth Centre polling station for TSH2 and TSH3 voters. Prior's Park Community Church building had been identified as a suitable alternative or additional polling place and Officers had worked through various iterations to try to provide a sensible split which enabled those in the northern part of the Ward to go to Tewkesbury Youth Centre and those in the southern part to go to the Community Church. It was explained that, in working up the arrangements, every effort was made to ensure that whole streets and roads were not split across polling districts to avoid confusion and that access to polling places was achievable, where possible, on foot. Despite considering numerous alternatives, no perfect solution had been found. However, one option was considered to be workable and met most of the criteria - this was the further proposal tabled at the meeting - and did not involve multiple splits of roads or streets across the two polling districts and there would be benefits in terms of reducing distances for the majority of residents in the two areas to their respective polling places. The other change being proposed was a realignment of TSH3(C) and TSH2(B) along the line of Gloucester Road so rather than making everyone in more rural areas, such as Odessa Park, go to Tewkesbury

Youth Centre, it was suggested that the Members' Lounge in the Public Services Centre be used as a polling place. This had benefits for Gloucester Road residents and, as the development south of Prior's Park had no direct road link to Prior's Park, it was also logical for those residents, and those on the Lincoln Green Lane development, to come to the Public Services Centre. A Member raised concern regarding the use of the Public Services Centre as a polling place for a Parliamentary election given there were likely to be political parties telling outside of the building; while other places such as places of worship and villages halls did not tend to be in use on polling day. As alternatives, he asked whether the adjoining Leisure Centre could be used or whether a separate portacabin on the Council site might be more appropriate. The Democratic and Elections Adviser acknowledged that the Public Services Centre was a sensitive location but the suggestion was to use the Members' Lounge so it was separate from the main entrance to the building with standalone entry. Whilst he understood the concern regarding tellers, electoral law protected the operation of polling stations and the activities and behaviour of tellers. A portacabin might be a viable alternative but he felt that a polling station facility could be operated within the Public Services Centre without undue cause for concern. He would be happy to see if there was a better location but the Centre was a recognised and well-used public facility. In response to a query as to where postal vote opening would take place and whether there would be any conflict with using the Members' Lounge as a polling station, the Democratic and Elections Adviser explained the intention was for postal vote opening to take place in another location within the building and he provided assurance that no electoral business would be conducted at the same time or in the same or adjoining area during polling day. A Member sought clarification as to the recommendations in relation to Tewkesbury South Ward and was advised that no changes were proposed to polling district TSH1(A) where St Joseph's Church would remain the polling place; the revised polling district TSHB would have a polling place at the Public Services Centre; the new polling district TSHC would comprise the area above the red line on the plan circulated around the table, with the polling place being Tewkesbury Youth Centre; and the new polling district TSHD would comprise the area below the red line on the plan circulated around the table, with the polling place being Prior's Park Community Church.

- 86.18 It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations as set out at Appendix 1 to the report be approved, subject to (i) an amendment to the proposals for Brockworth West Ward so that either St Patrick's Church Hall or the Victoria Inn could be used as a fall-back option should the highway and parking issues not be resolved at The Edge Community Centre and (ii) the sub-division of the originally-proposed Tewkesbury South TSH3(C) polling district to reflect the separate plan circulated around the table with electors from properties above the red line to continue to vote at Tewkesbury Youth Centre in a revised polling district TSHC, and electors from properties below the red line to vote at Prior's Park Community Church in a new polling district TSHD; that authority be delegated to the Returning Officer to make any further polling place and/or polling station changes as necessary to enable the efficient and effective conduct of elections; that authority be delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer to make any changes necessary to the Register of Electors; that the removal of numbers from polling district references and their replacement with letters (with any reference to 1 becoming A, 2 becoming B, 3 becoming C and so on) be approved; and that authority be delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer to make any further changes as may be necessary to polling district references.
- 86.19 During the debate which ensued, a Member expressed the view that the report did not make clear that local Ward Members had been consulted in depth regarding the proposals and the Democratic and Elections Adviser apologised if that had not come across strongly enough; he had made reference today to the fact that Members' local knowledge had been invaluable and it was not his intention to

underplay that involvement for which Officers were extremely grateful. With regard to the proposals for Tewkesbury South, a Member indicated that he was not keen to have the added expense of hiring a portacabin when there was an appropriate space within the Public Service Centre and he would be proud to use the Members' Lounge as a place for the community to vote. He felt tellers were more likely to behave with Officers, and the Police, within the building and was sure that any material referencing elected Members would be removed during that time. This view was supported by another Member. The Democratic and Elections Adviser provided assurance that electors would be notified of any changes agreed by Members well in advance of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections; it would not be left to poll cards to inform them in due course of their new polling places.

86.20 Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the recommendations set out at Appendix 1 to the report be **APPROVED** subject to:
 - i. an amendment to the proposals for the Brockworth West Ward so that either St Patrick's Church Hall or the Victoria Inn can be used as a fall-back option should the highway and parking issues not be resolved at The Edge Community Centre and
 - ii. the sub-division of the originally-proposed Tewkesbury South TSH3(C) polling district to reflect the separate plan circulated around the table with electors from properties above the red line to continue to vote at Tewkesbury Youth Centre in a revised polling district TSHC and residents from properties below the red line to vote at Prior's Park Community Church in a new polling district TSHD.
2. That, pending any further formal review, authority be delegated to the Returning Officer to make any further polling place and/or polling station changes as necessary to enable the efficient and effective conduct of elections.
3. That authority be delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer to make any changes as necessary to the Register of Electors.
4. That the removal of numbers from Polling District References and their replacement with letters (with any reference to 1 becoming A, 2 becoming B, 3 becoming C, and so on) be **APPROVED**.
5. That authority be delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer to make any further changes as may be necessary to Polling District References.

CL.87 SCHEME OF MEMBER ALLOWANCES 2024/25

87.1 Attention was drawn to the report of the Democratic and Elections Adviser, circulated at Pages No. 185-194, which asked Members to determine the Scheme of Allowances to take effect on 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2025 having regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

87.2 The Leader of the Council proposed, and it was seconded, that no changes be made to the current Scheme of Member Allowances with all current allowances to remain in place for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. This was in

accordance with the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel. The Leader of the Council indicated that he has asked for clarification in relation to Page No. 190 of the report which stated that the Independent and Parish Members of the Standards Committee received a co-optees allowance of £1,000. The Monitoring Officer explained that the reference related to the position in 2010 rather than the current position which was that the two Independent Persons, who advised him as Monitoring Officer and attended Standards Committee meetings, were paid £500 per annum; the three Parish Councillors who had recently been appointed to the Standards Committee would receive no payment.

87.3 Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED That no changes be made to the current Scheme of Member Allowances with all current allowances to remain in place for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

CL.88 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2024/25

88.1 The report of the Head of Service: Democratic and Electoral Services, circulated at Pages No. 195-200, asked Members to approve the Schedule of Meetings 2024/25 and to agree that Council meetings shall commence at 6:30pm rather than 6:00pm.

88.2 It was proposed and seconded that the Schedule of Meetings 2024/25 be approved and that it be agreed that Council meetings commence at 6:30pm rather than 6:00pm. The Leader of the Council advised that feedback from Members had suggested that it would be beneficial for Council meetings to be held at the slightly later time of 6:30pm in order to enable them to attend in a timely fashion.

88.3 A Member pointed out that, had the Council meeting this evening started at 6:30pm, it would now be after 9:00pm and she questioned how many Members had requested the later start. In response, the Leader of the Council explained that, as part of the Constitution Review Working Group, Group Leaders had asked their respective Groups their preferred start time of 6:00pm, 6:30pm or 7:00pm and the responses received had been taken into consideration. A Member questioned whether consideration had been given to public transport options and the impact the later start time would have on those who relied on those methods to attend Council meetings. The Leader of the Council felt this was a good point which had not been fully considered; however, Members had been asked for their feedback and that point had not been raised. Another Member indicated that she would be very happy to provide a lift for any Members who needed one to and/or from Council meetings.

88.4 A Member noted that resumption of the Annual Council meeting was due to be held the day after Mayor Making, i.e. 14 May and 15 May 2024, and he asked what had prompted that change as historically there was a week between the two meetings. In response, the Director: Corporate Resources explained that this change had been implemented in 2023 to facilitate a meeting of the Planning Committee in May at the request of the service.

88.5 Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Schedule of Meetings 2024/25 be **APPROVED**.
2. That Council meetings commence at 6:30pm rather than 6:00pm.

The meeting closed at 8:30 pm